



BIG OAKS

Newsletter of Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge & Big Oaks Conservation Society

Fall/Winter 2005

Refuge Manager's Corner

By Joe Robb

Goodbyes and Hellos

As in everyone's life, we live through changes at the refuge. During the past few months we have had a large number of changes, some good and some sad. With great sadness we said goodbye to one of the refuge staff, Teresa Vanosdol, who returned to school to pursue a degree in Veterinary Medicine. Although we support Teresa on her new venture, we will greatly miss her talent and sense of humor. Much of our habitat management, public use and volunteer programs, and wildlife studies were influenced by her knowledge and dedication.

With her goodbye, we said hello to several new staff over the past several months. David Jones was hired as a Fire Technician in February and has been busy ever since. Besides his work here at Big Oaks, he has traveled out west fighting wildfires and along the Gulf Coast with hurricane relief work. In February we also hired a full-time Law Enforcement Officer, Travis Robison, who has been through a rigorous 8-month training program that saw him travel to the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center in Georgia, the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia, and to several refuges in the Midwest to complete his training. Dave and Travis were both hired for the leadership skills I think they possess and the potential they bring to the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service. We also recently hired several intermittent temporary employees to help during the busy times at the refuge. We hired Beth Black, Lisa Jones, and Laura Lake as Park Rangers to help with the

public use activities at the refuge. Many of you will remember Laura, who recently left our permanent staff to start a family with her husband Ray. We welcome Laura back to the refuge and appreciate all the skills and knowledge she brings back. Lisa interned this summer and vigorously spearheaded the invasive species mapping and control project; she also has a variety of interpretive and environmental education experience. Beth had previously volunteered at the refuge and recently worked at the Lanier Mansion State Historic Site; she also has been active in local conservation efforts. We hired Kim Brinson as an intermittent Maintenance Worker; Kim works full-time at Versailles State Park and is active in a local Ducks Unlimited Chapter. Kim worked with us during our previous prescribed fire season as a firefighter.

I also mourn the loss of two of the Society's members, Marjorie Adkins and Paul Roahrig. Marjorie came to the very first organizational meetings that evolved into the Big Oaks Conservation Society. Paul was active in many of Madison's community organizations, and he deeply loved the refuge's conservation mission.

I want to personally thank Rick Collier, who recently finished his term as President of the Big Oaks Conservation Society. It was under Rick's leadership that the Society became established and incorporated as a legal non-profit organization. He helped set the stage and spent countless hours on many of the accomplishments that the Society can be proud of during its existence. I appreciate his friendship to me and to the refuge. Rick passes the gavel to George Terlinden, who has been a friend to the refuge in many capacities, also from the beginning. We are positive about these new beginnings as we remember and mourn the changes of the past year.

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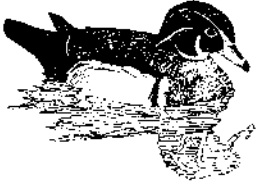
BIG OAKS NOTES

BIG OAKS NOTES

By Jason Lewis

For the Birds...

Throughout the year the refuge monitors various bird species. Whip-poor-wills, northern saw-whet owls,



Henslow's sparrows, and wood ducks are individually targeted through banding operations or road-side counts. The refuge conducts Breeding Bird surveys, Christmas Bird (CBC) and May

Day counts to obtain data on the distribution and abundance of various bird species. Breeding Bird surveys are completed by refuge staff in June using road side counting methods to monitor breeding species. The CBC and May Day counts are administered by the Audubon Society which compile data from the winter and spring counts and evaluate the distribution of species nation wide.

The 2005 whip-poor-will survey produced 103 birds, an impressive number given that this species has exhibited significant population declines over the last decade.

The forested areas on Big Oaks provide the needed breeding habitat for whip-poor-wills. Refuge biologists and volunteers conducted road side surveys to count these birds and analyze data to determine the population trend.



Refuge interns and staff administer two banding operations: wood duck and northern saw-whet owl banding. Wood duck banding was completed in July and August and was a joint project with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. A total of 29 ducks were captured and banded using swim-in traps. These traps were placed around the refuge within beaver ponds and at Old Timbers Lake. Refuge staff band northern saw-whet owls starting mid-October through December 1. To date, 15 owls have been captured including one foreign recapture (already banded). The refuge has reported the band to the bird banding lab and was informed the bird was originally banded two years ago near Manitowoc, Wisconsin.



The Christmas Bird Count will be held December 17th. Anyone interested in volunteering for the CBC, or any other monitoring project, please contact the office.

Private Lands Assistance Program

Big Oaks NWR continued to provide technical and cost-share assistance to private landowners through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program (PFW). With the help of countless partners including the Indiana Department of Natural Resources and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), we worked with local private landowners to restore approximately 190 acres of wildlife habitat in 2005. Wetlands, native forests, and prairies were the types of habitats restored. The refuge prescribed fire crew assisted private landowners with controlled, management burns of 56.5 acres of native prairie under the program. If you would like to restore wildlife habitat on your property or need technical assistance, please contact the refuge office.

Invasive Species Project

Invasive species continue to be the number one risk to wildlife diversity and habitat management. For the last two years the refuge has waged a silent war against invasive plants that threaten native flora and fauna. These unwanted invaders alter habitat and reduce available resources for competing plants and animals. During 2005, refuge staff and volunteers from BOCS combated garlic mustard, autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, and Japanese stilt grass. Volunteers provided over 350 hours of service pulling, spraying, and weed-eating various invasive species.



Garlic Mustard
(*Alliaria petiolata*)



**BOCS volunteers with bags of garlic mustard they pulled.
Deanna Robison, Lori and Wayne Hoffman**

Refuge Management More Than Counting Critters

By Dan Matiatos

When most people think of working for the Fish and Wildlife Service they envision working outdoors catching, counting, and watching critters or managing habitat. This is the appealing, fun part of the job that lured most of us into this field, but operating a refuge involves much more. Outside of all the paperwork and reporting requirements, we also are responsible for maintaining the infrastructure to support management and public use activities. At Big Oaks NWR we have approximately 120 miles of roads, 23 bridges, numerous culverts, boat ramps, kiosks, shelters, signs, and other facilities that require maintenance. This isn't the glamorous part of operating a refuge but it is vitally necessary to support refuge wildlife and public use programs.

A sample of the management activities that were conducted over the summer include mowing and grading many miles of road, and removing downed trees from roads after just about every summer storm. We also replaced large culverts along Cottrel and H roads, and cleaned and maintained beaver levelers to lessen water impacts to roads.

A 500-gallon diesel tank and a 500-gallon gasoline fuel tank were placed near building 444 this summer. The installation of the tanks should be completed by early fall. These fuel tanks will be extremely useful for refuge operations and the prescribed fire program.

Improvements were made to the parking lot around building 444 that will improve access to the building and new fuel tanks, and improve safety for activities

around the building.

The Old Timbers Lake boat ramps, originally placed by the Army in the early 1970's, are starting to show some age with rust damage. Repairs were made to the ramp at the dam where rust had destroyed portions of the ramp almost large enough that a boat trailer tire could slip through.

With the help of Indiana Air National Guard, we were able to get the site for the new outdoor classroom, located near Old Timbers Lake inspected for any potential ordnance issues. This new facility will be partially funded through a grant awarded to BOCS. Although, ordnance concerns are less in the public day use area, anytime earth is being disturbed for most construction activities on the refuge ordnance avoidance is required.

Work continued on the Kiosk at Highway 421 and Michigan Road. Versailles Boy Scout Troop 607 stained the structure in June and the project should be completed early this winter with improvements to the parking lot and informational signs installed. A smaller but similar kiosk at the refuge office should also be completed this winter.

Refuge staff and regional office personnel have been working on two major projects that should be initiated this fall. Repair and maintenance will be conducted on the Big Creek Bridge located near the intersection of Jinestown and D roads. Also, the first portion of work to the Old Timbers Lake dam and spillway was completed in November.

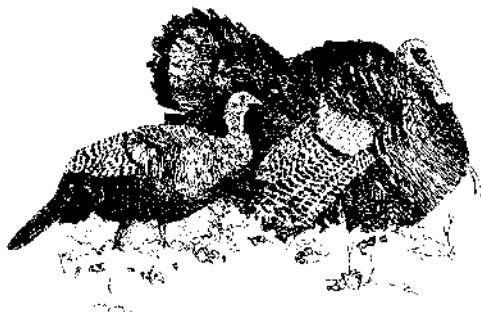
Lastly, the refuge hired Kim Brinson as a temporary intermittent maintenance worker this fall which will help in accomplishing many of the day-to-day tasks mentioned above.

These were just a few of the maintenance items and facilities that were worked on this summer. It was a busy summer for refuge operations. It can be awfully frustrating at times with so many other things to get accomplished in addition to the ambitious wildlife monitoring and management program on the refuge. However, when you look at the big picture, we are pretty lucky to have jobs where we get to enjoy wildlife and nature while working in the outdoors.



Big Oaks Staff Provides Hurricane Relief

The Big Oaks fire crew helped out with the hurricane Katrina relief efforts in September and October. Brian Winters, Jason Lewis and David Jones were dispatched to Gulf Island National Seashore in Ocean Springs, Mississippi, as a chainsaw crew. While there they helped prepare the park campgrounds to house displaced park employees, coast guard employees and citizens from the local community. This entailed clearing park roads, dropping hazardous trees, cleaning up storm debris and building pads for FEMA trailers. They were also recruited to survey forest mortality on the many mosquito infested islands that make up Gulf Island National Seashores. "We had no idea Mississippi got hit so hard" said Prescribed Fire Specialist Brian Winters "the amount of storm debris was amazing, they will be cleaning up for years."



Big Oaks 2005 Spring Wild Turkey Hunt

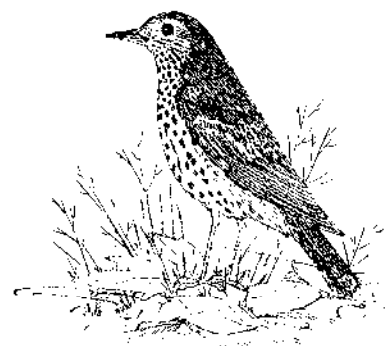
The 2005 Refuge Wild Turkey Season provided exciting hunting opportunities for youth and experienced hunters from around Indiana and afar. The National Wild Turkey Federation continued its long-standing support of the Youth Turkey Hunt by providing prizes and food to attendees of the youth hunt workshop. Although the youth hunters did not have an overwhelming impact on the wild turkey population, harvesting four birds, the experience provided memories that will last a lifetime. With around 977 hunter-use days, the 2005 harvest of 42 was well below the 8 year average (62/yr). Factors such as weather and lower hunter turnout influence harvest totals as well as overall hunter success.

Fall/Winter Interns Experience Big Oaks NWR

This fall and winter we will be conducting vegetation surveys, capturing and banding northern saw-whet owls, surveying white-tailed deer, controlling invasive vegetation, helping out with the deer hunt, and setting up remote sensing cameras to document the presence of bobcats on the refuge.

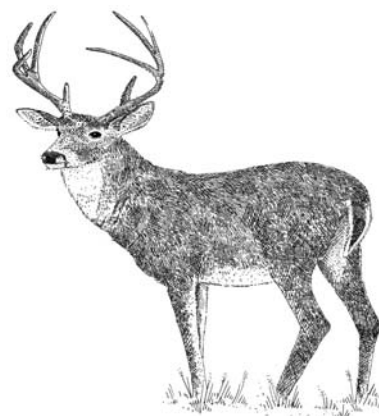
Evan Mickle, Rosemont, New Jersey

Before coming to Big Oaks I worked on a wood thrush research project under Dr. Roland Roth at the University of Delaware, and spent a year with the U.S. Peace Corps in Mongolia. When I return home this winter I will be continuing work on a B.S. in Conservation and Applied Ecology from Rutgers University.



Julia Fromfeld, Wausau, Wisconsin

I graduated from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point two years ago with a major in Wildlife Management. This past summer I worked in Texas running a banding station for the Institute of Bird Populations on a Monitoring Avian Populations and Survivorship (MAPS) program. After this internship I plan to get another wildlife job to get more experience and eventually plan on going on to graduate school.



NEW BIG OAKS STAFF

David Jones - Fire Program Technician

I am here at Big Oaks NWR to assist with prescribed fire activities within Region 3. My other duties are to aid in refuge projects such as road maintenance, visitor use days and vegetation control. I grew up in Illinois on a small farm, where I grew to love the outdoors. My first job was working for my father in the family owned machine shop where I learned metal working skills; I also realized my need to be outdoors. I was able to find a job with the Mchenry County Conservation District as a forestry aid. Shortly following, I went off to Southern Illinois University, where I received a degree in Recreational Forestry. I was lucky enough to get a forestry technician job on the Shawnee National Forest, where I was able to work my way through college. Following graduation, I received a temporary fire position with Crab Orchard National Wildlife Refuge, also in southern Illinois. Soon after, I received a permanent position here at Big Oaks NWR. I made the move to southeastern Indiana with my lovely wife, Lisa, and our three dogs Sadie, Sedona, and Forest.

Travis Robison - Park Ranger Law Enforcement

Originally from Pennsylvania, I attended the University of Colorado at Boulder and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science and a commission as an officer in the United States Army. I served for five years as a Field Artillery Officer and was stationed in Germany and Korea. After five years in the Army I decided to leave the service and was hired to work at Big Oaks NWR as a Refuge Law Enforcement Officer. I completed all required law enforcement training and I am now working on both Big Oaks and Muscatatuck NWRs. I'm excited to finally get to work and develop a full-time law enforcement program that will address the varied needs of both refuges. I live with my wife, Deanna, here in Madison. We are both impressed by the beauty of Southern Indiana and the friendly, welcoming people we have met.

Laura Lake - Park Ranger

I aid in informing visitors about the refuge, give guided tours, public presentations, work with volunteers, and assist with GIS projects. I have a M.S. in Wildlife Management from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, and a B.S. in Biology from

Marian College, Indianapolis, IN. I previously worked as a fire program technician and intern at Big Oaks. I live with my husband and baby daughter, Clair, in Batesville, IN. It has been a joy to come back and work at the refuge again.

Lisa Jones - Park Ranger

I aid in informing visitors about the refuge, give guided tours, public presentations, and work with volunteers. Prior to beginning as a Park Ranger, I spent the summer at Big Oaks working as an intern. I grew up in the suburbs of Chicago, Illinois. I received an Associates of Art, Certificate of Floral Design, and Certificate of Master Floral Design at a Junior College. I also attended Southern Illinois University where I received a degree in Recreational Forestry. During college I worked for the Shawnee National Forest as a Recreational Technician, the Boy Scouts of America as a Nature Director, and I was a counselor at a camp for the disabled. My husband, David Jones, and I are very excited to work at Big Oaks NWR.

Beth Black - Park Ranger

I aid in informing visitors about the refuge, give guided tours, public presentations, and work with volunteers. I was born and raised in Marion, Iowa. I have a B.S. in Conservation Biology from Upper Iowa University. My husband, Chris, and I currently live near Manville, IN on 34 acres with our two dogs, Ursula and Tavish. I have worked as a naturalist, interpreter, and gypsy moth trapper, among other things. My hobbies include making beaded jewelry, camping, reading and gardening.

Kim Brinson - Maintenance

I assist the refuge with a variety of maintenance duties including operating tractors and other heavy equipment to maintain the many miles of road at the refuge. I also have worked on the refuge fire crew in the past, and will continue to assist the fire program. I was raised near Cross Plains, IN and currently live in Versailles, IN. I am an avid outdoors person and enjoy hunting, fishing, and managing my family's property for wildlife. I'm glad to have the opportunity to assist with wildlife management activities at Big Oaks NWR.

BIG OAKS CONSERVATION SOCIETY

Mission Statement: To support the goals of wildlife conservation and habitat restoration at Big Oaks NWR; develop environmental education programs; enhance public awareness; encourage use and appreciation for the natural and cultural assets unique to Big Oaks.

BOCS Hosts Third Annual Take a Kid Fishing Day

By Jim Leveille

On June 18, 2005, Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge hosted its third annual Take A Kid Fishing Day at Old Timbers Lake. The 165-acre lake provided plenty of action for the youth and their families on a perfect weather day.

The event was co-sponsored by the Big Oaks Conservation Society (BOCS) which secured free meals and organized the event. Madison's Wal-Mart provided a grant towards food and prizes purchased. Store manager Jim Gilley, was on hand and assisted with the kids' casting contests. Volunteers from Versailles Boy Scout Troop 607 helped with set up and bait distribution. Additional prizes and free fishing tackle were donated by Zebco and Dick's Sporting Goods. Every participant received a free fishing supply kit and tackle box.

The annual event encourages families to visit the refuge lake and to fish at no charge. Volunteers assist inexperienced anglers and the refuge provides rods and reels, as well as bait, free of charge. Refuge manager, Joe Robb, noted that the event has grown steadily in popularity with this year's attendance being seventy-nine kids and eighty-two adults.



Participants in Take a Kid Fishing Day.

Be sure to check out our website:

www.bigoaks.org for more information about BOCS, and pictures of previous events.

Annual Big Oaks Fish Fry

BOCS held their annual fish fry and refuge tours on Saturday, October 1. Attendance was well over 100, with around 50 people taking staff-guided refuge tours. It was a beautiful fall day to enjoy the sites and sounds of the refuge, and meet other community members with an interest in conservation and the refuge.

BOCS Officers

President - George Terlinden

Vice-President - Jim Gilley

Treasurer - Dan Herron

Secretary/Business Manager - Lori Hoffman

Board Members:

Dave Bear - Jim Leveille - Bill Poindexter

Deanna Robison - Ed Schaefer

MEMORIAL

Big Oaks Conservation Society lost one of its founding members, **Marjorie Adkins**. Margie was the group's oldest member. She attended many meetings and enjoyed attending BOCS activities. She is sadly missed by daughter and son-in-law, Diane and Dale Carson.

Paul Roahrig, a member of Big Oaks Conservation Society, passed away on Tuesday, August 2, 2005, in Gallup, New Mexico. Professionally, his career began as a District Executive for the Boy Scouts of America. He was Director of the Madison Area Special Services Unit for 16 years and Director of Special Services for Johnson County Schools for 7 years. He was also active in his community where he lived in Madison, Indiana and had just recently joined the Historic Board of Madison. Upon his retirement, he received the Sagamore of the Wabash from Governor O'Bannon, the highest honor a Hoosier can receive. He was an avid fly-fisherman, golfer and storyteller. Paul will be sadly missed by his family and colleagues. He is survived by his wife, two sons, and grandson.

OUTDOOR WOMEN at BIG OAKS EVENT A SUCCESS!

Outdoor Women at Big Oaks, an event sponsored by the Big Oaks Conservation Society, Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge, Indiana Air National Guard, and the National Wild Turkey Federation, was held at the refuge in June. Over 100 people were in attendance with around 50 women experiencing many types of outdoor activities. A similar event will be held in 2006. Call the refuge if you would like to help.



Species Spotlight

By Teresa Vanosdol

BOX TURTLE

Box turtles are one of the most loved and recognized animals of North America. Two species of box turtles exist in the U.S., the eastern box turtle (Terrapen carolina) and the western (or ornate) box turtle (Terrapen ornata). Eastern box turtles are quite common on Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge and they are the focus of this issue's species spotlight.

Eastern box turtles occupy the eastern United States ranging from as far north as southern Maine, south to southern Florida and west to Michigan, Illinois, eastern Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Eastern box turtles are terrestrial and habitat preferences include open woodlands, pastures and marshy meadows. They can often be found near shallow ponds, swamps or streams soaking in the water on a hot summer day.

The Eastern box turtle is considered omnivorous (eats plants and animals). Its diet includes fruits, mushrooms, grasses, insects, spiders, slugs, snails, earthworms, carrion, and small vertebrates. Young box turtles are primarily carnivorous the first 5 to 6 years of life and often hunt in ponds and streams because the food they prefer is found there. Adults feed primarily on land. If habitat conditions remain favorable, a box turtle may inhabit an area scarcely larger than a football field its whole life!

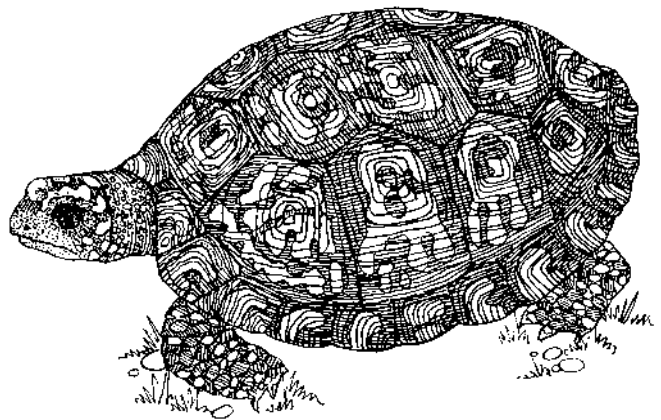
Characteristics differentiating the sexes involve size and structural differences. Males, on average, are slightly larger than females in body size. Males also have thicker and longer tails. Males usually have red irises and a concave plastron (underside of the shell) and females have yellowish-brown irises and a flat underside. Female box turtles lay 3 to 8 oval, soft-shelled eggs in a shallow nest in late spring to early summer. Eggs are left unguarded and hatch in 75 to 90 days in late summer to early fall. Box turtles reach sexual maturity at 7 to 10 years of age. Box turtles commonly reach the age of 25-30 years and have been documented to live up to 138 years!

Box turtles will enter hibernation as early as October (especially in the northern range) or as late as early December. Box turtles burrow up to 2 feet into loose earth, mud, stream bottoms, old stump holes, or

hibernacula. And some turtles may return to the same hibernacula in successive years. Box turtles emerge from hibernation in April, sometimes earlier depending on spring temperatures.

Other unique features of the eastern box turtle include the hinged shell of the box turtle. This feature allows the turtle to retract almost completely into its bony armor and protect itself from predators. Hatchling box turtles do not have a hinge, but develop one after a year or two. The shell of a turtle is composed of 60 different bones all connected and covered with plates (also known as scutes) that offer additional strength and protection. Turtles have an excellent sense of smell and have good eyesight, hearing and sense of touch. In fact, the shell even contains nerve endings!

Conservation concerns for the eastern box turtle include habitat destruction and fragmentation and over collecting for the pet trade. Habitat destruction and fragmentation often leads to box turtles crossing roadways or crop fields to disperse to areas of suitable habitat and results in many vehicular and farm equipment fatalities. Collecting box turtles for the pet trade has also contributed to their decline. Box turtles are sometimes found far outside of their normal range due to their popularity as house pets. Although box turtles are long-lived creatures and females lay hundreds of eggs in their lifetime only 2-3 offspring will survive to adulthood to maintain the overall population at a stable size. Since the fall of 2004, the collection of box turtles from the wild in Indiana is no longer allowed. New laws governing box turtle collection and continued public education of their habitat needs hopefully will reduce the overall population decline.





Jim Gilley, Congressman Mike Sodrell, Sara Leveille.



Big Oaks picture collage presented to Congressman Sodrel.

The visit began at the Refuge office where the Congressman could see for himself the less-than-adequate 1350 square-foot office space the refuge staff of nine is currently sharing with the Army. There the Big Oaks Conservation Society presented him with a framed photo collage of Big Oaks for his Washington, DC office, and Joe Robb gave him a signed Indiana refuge poster. The outdoor tour, complete with numerous wildlife sightings, began heading north to the refuge's new kiosk, located on the corner of State Highway 421 and Old Michigan Road. This would also be the optimum location for a future Staff Office/Visitor Contact Station, where visitors would have easy access to the refuge's offerings. Next on the tour was Old Timbers Lake, and finally, the visit ended with a tour of Old Timbers Lodge, a historic building of which the BOCS is considering pursuing stewardship. The Representative and his staff were impressed with the structure and thought it worthy of attention.

Congressman Sodrel has shown his support for Big Oaks NWR through his funding request for a Staff Office/Visitor Contact Station, through his help in procuring \$150,000 for the rehabilitation of Old Timbers Lake dam, and now through his personal visit of the refuge. The refuge staff and Big Oaks Conservation Society are truly appreciative of the Congressman's interest and support, and look forward to working with Indiana's 9th District Congressman.

Congressman Sodrel Visits Big Oaks NWF

By Sara Leveille

On August 18, 2005, newly elected Indiana Congressman Mike Sodrel took time out of his busy schedule to visit Big Oaks NWR. He was accompanied by Frank Thompson, Area Director, and his Chief of Staff, Cam Savage. Refuge Manager Joe Robb, Refuge Operations Specialist Dan Matiatos, Big Oaks Conservation Society's Vice President Jim Gilley, BOCS Member Sara Leveille, and Army Site Manager Ken Knouf, had the pleasure of meeting with the Congressman and giving him a tour of the refuge.



BOCS members Steve and Nyla Dugle at Take a Kid Fishing Day.

A SUCCESSFUL OLD TIMBERS LODGE HISTORY SEMINAR

On an absolutely gorgeous October 15th Saturday, 80 participants gathered at Old Timbers Lodge for the 4th Annual JPG History Seminar. Sponsored by the JPG Heritage Partnership, and in cooperation with Big Oaks NWR, Historic Hoosier Hills, and the Indiana Air National Guard, the seminar focused on the effect of Jefferson Proving Ground on the Ripley County portion of Big Oaks NWR.

LTC Matt Sweeney opened the morning with a briefing on the history and mission of Jefferson Range, the 1,000+ acre “doughnut hole” of military activity on K Rd. Matt talked about the military value of the range for F-16 fighter training and the anticipated relationship with the new Homeland Security training complex at Butlerville. The next segment of the program dealt with Old Timbers Lodge and was presented in a tag team fashion by three speakers. Carole Poffinbarger, granddaughter of Hallie Miller, who was the Thomson family cook, reflected on her grandmother’s stories about the lodge, and projected some wonderful early photographs of family members connected with Old Timbers. JPGHP Chairperson Norma Lou Irwin next spoke on her association with the lodge when she was a young girl and shared her painful memories when the family was forced to leave by the Army. Ken Knouf briefed the group on how the lodge was used after JPG was established and speculations for its future (which hopefully will involve Big Oaks Conservation Society).

After a lunch catered by the Rolling Pin out of Versailles, Jean McClellan shared humorous stories of families who were tied in with Marble Corner, the largest community to perish when the Army established JPG. The day ended with Vernon Shepherd, from Brownsburg, IN displaying a very thorough Power Point presentation on families who lived up in the area now under Old Timbers Lake. Vernon’s home had the chimney for which Old Chimney Point was named.

It was a great day for those who attended, and made even better by the fact that two new books went on sale - Barbara Jachimiak’s “Saint Magdalene Church” and the reprint of Chilton Thomson’s “Old Timbers Lodge.” If interested in either of these books, see Ken Knouf. The Old Timbers book was sold out almost immediately, but a re-order has been made.

VISITOR INFORMATION

All visitors must annually view a safety video and sign an acknowledgment of danger form. This will give you access to the areas designated for public use. There is a daily access fee, or users may purchase an annual pass. The day use area covers 4,170 acres. An additional 22,500 acres is open to the public for special hunts and guided tours. The public may access the refuge from mid-April to the end of November every Monday and Friday, and the second and fourth Saturdays from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Would you like to become a Big Oaks Volunteer? Opportunities are plentiful to assist refuge staff in their management of the sprawling 50,000-acre refuge. There are a variety of positions available. Those who enjoy fieldwork and the outdoors are needed to lead wildlife and educational tours at the refuge. Individuals or community-minded groups are also needed for bi-annual litter pick-ups along the refuge roadsides. Both of these tasks permit volunteers the opportunity to access Big Oaks at no cost and to see areas of the refuge not commonly viewed by typical visitors. If indoor tasks are more your cup of tea, then consider the refuge’s need for speakers who can visit schools and civic groups to speak about Big Oaks. Those interested in becoming ambassadors for Big Oaks would receive instruction and training in the history and on-going projects associated with the refuge. For individuals who don’t care to wander Big Oaks vast spaces, or are intimidated at the prospect of speaking to strangers, then the friendly U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) staff could always use help in their office. This could involve checking in visitors, answering phones, or aiding in the refuge’s safety-briefing program. The opportunity to become involved is open to all.

REFUGE ACTIVITIES

Visitors can hunt white-tailed deer, squirrel and wild turkey. You may also fish at Old Timbers Lake, however, because of high demand, there is a quota system for boaters. If you enjoy observing wildlife and photography, the refuge offers many scenic areas of hardwood forest, wetland, grassland and shrub land habitat. There is much diversity among the plants, fish, birds and other animals that inhabit the refuge. You may also enjoy the interpretive programs that focus on habitat restoration and management. The refuge enjoys providing educational opportunities for students, educators and organizations.

BOCS ITEMS FOR SALE

The Big Oaks Conservation Society is selling Big Oaks hats and Indiana refuge license plates to raise money for projects that benefit the refuge. The hats are \$12 each and can be purchased at the refuge office. Indiana National Wildlife Refuge plates are \$8. Topographic maps of the refuge are also available for \$12.

Show your Big Oaks Conservation Society Membership Card and get a 10% discount!

Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge
1661 West JPG Niblo Road
Madison, IN 47250
Phone: 812-273-0783
Fax: 812-273-0786
E-mail: bigoaks@fws.com
Website: Midwest.fws.gov/bigoaks

REFUGE STAFF

Dr. Joe Robb - Refuge Manager
Dan Matiatos - Refuge Operations Specialist
Jason Lewis - Wildlife Biologist
Janet Pike - Administrative Technician
Brian Winters - Prescribed Fire Specialist
David Jones - Fire Program Technician
Travis Robison - Park Ranger LE
Laura Lake - Park Ranger
Lisa Jones - Park Ranger
Beth Black - Park Ranger
Kim Brinson - Maintenance Worker
Julia Fromfeld - Intern
Evan Mickle - Intern

BIG OAKS

Newsletter

Winter 2005
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Big Oaks National Wildlife Refuge

Newsletter Editor
Janice Kleopfer

Special Thanks to:
Big Oaks Staff

Contributing Members



BIG OAKS

Conservation Society

Membership Benefits

10% discount on
merchandise

opportunities to participate
in special refuge events

contribute to the improve-
ment of the refuge for all
visitors

Big Oaks Newsletter

Reminder! BOCS' membership year runs from October 1 through
September 30 of the next year. Please pay your dues on time - the Society
depends on dues to help fund the Youth Events, etc.

If you would like to join, or rejoin, the **Big Oaks Conservation Society**, to support the refuge,
please fill out this membership form and send along with your check to:

Big Oaks Conservation Society
P.O Box 935
Madison, IN 47250

Check here if this is a
renewal

Yearly Membership Form (Oct. to Sept. 30) Please select a category.

___ Youth \$5

___ Individual \$15

___ Family \$25

___ Supporting \$25

___ Lifetime (per Individual) \$150

___ Corporate \$500

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Zip _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

**BIG OAKS
NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

2005

December Christmas Bird Count

2006

January River otters slide in the snow

February Great horned owls nest

March Big Oaks is smokin' - prescribed burning

April Migrating birds, wildflowers, turkey hunt,
fishing begins

May Sign up for a refuge tour!

June Breeding bird surveys

July Butterfly survey

August Squirrel season starts

September Migration begins!

October Deer archery season

November Deer shotgun season, Youth Deer Hunt,
last chance to fish



**Big Oaks
Conservation Society
P.O. Box 935
Madison, IN 4725**

Board Members

George Terlinden, President
Jim Gilley, Vice President
Lori Hoffman, Secretary and
Business Manager
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